

Key Largo / US 1 Corridor Enhancement Plan

Monroe County, Florida
September 29, 2005

KEY LARGO US 1 CORRIDOR ENHANCEMENT PLAN

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HDR Inc.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The US 1 Enhancement Plan is part of the Key Largo Livable CommuniKeys Master Plan and a planning tool which Monroe County will use to identify and direct improvements and development along the US 1 corridor between Mile Marker 97 and 107. US 1 is the highway that connects all portions of the Florida Keys to the mainland. It serves various functions along its 124-mile length; including, in places, as a main street, a rural highway and above all as the only vehicular link between the communities in the Keys.

The highway’s right-of-way is contained within what used to be two systems: the Flagler railroad and the Overseas Highway. The hurricane of 1925 destroyed the Flagler railroad and prompted the realignment of the Overseas Highway. The southbound lanes, for the most part, are in what used to be railroad alignment whereas the northbound lanes are the original alignment of the Overseas Highway.

Most importantly, US Highway 1 serves as the hurricane evacuation route for all of the Florida Keys. This requirement dictates that the highway maintain a Level of Service “C” over its entire 124-mile length with an average speed of 45 mph. This condition has significant implications for the quality of the pedestrian realm within the US 1 ROW. The high travel speeds combined with the significant width of the ROW, which can be as wide as 180 feet in certain locations, makes it very difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists to comfortably cross the highway. Ultimately, the areas of safe and comfortable pedestrian realms are confined to limited portions of the ROW, paralleling either side of the highway.

The US 1 Enhancement Plan was created as part of an intensive community planning process. Public involvement in this process included design workshops that engaged the community in a consensus building discussion and extracted the knowledge that the community has of itself. These workshops enabled the consultant team to prepare alternative plans to match the community’s vision and allowed the community to respond to these alternatives.

The design enhancements described in this document intend to improve pedestrian and bicycling mobility within the US 1 corridor. They also seek to improve the visual and spatial quality of the corridor while maintaining the mandated Levels of Service and adhering to the general planning principles outlined in the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan and zoning laws.



Figure 1 Bird’s Eye View of US Highway 1



Figure 2 Community Planning Workshops



Figure 3 The Highway’s Proximity to the Waterfront



Figure 4 The Challenge is to Create Descriptive Places

2. STUDY AREA CONDITIONS

The study area for the US 1 Enhancement Master Plan includes the following areas within Mile Marker 97 to Mile Marker 107:

- Publicly owned portions of the US 1/Overseas Highway right-of-way,
- Privately owned properties with parcel frontage on the US 1/Overseas Highway right-of-way, and
- Public and/or privately owned properties located within pedestrian walking distance of focal areas.

Function

Depending upon the criteria applied, US 1 is, or is not, a successful element of Key Largo's public infrastructure. This dichotomy arises from the multiple requirements placed upon the corridor. On the one hand, the highway is efficient in moving vehicular traffic and it meets the standards that are intended to ensure adequate hurricane evacuation. There are limited traffic signals to reduce traffic interruptions and vehicles generally move in an organized manner. Drivers typically exceed the posted speed limits as the facility is a 4-lane divided rural cross-section that permits comfortable high speed travel.

On the other hand, from the perspective of the people who live, work, and play within the communities bisected by the highway, it does not perform particularly well. Pedestrian and bicycle accommodations are limited. Sidewalks are non-existent or inadequate, the bike path is not well designed to function as an amenity, pedestrians and bicyclists are not well protected through signalized crossings, and destinations along the route are isolated and often obscured.

The highway is characterized by its rural cross-section and the island's geography. The existing highway has no curbs and the non-paved areas of the right-of-way (excluding planted medians) are almost uniformly covered with stabilized shell. The lack of a defined edge to the roadway permits vehicular traffic to enter and/or exit the facility at numerous points along the corridor. This limited attention to access management creates continuous conditions in which vehicles are parked within the ROW and cross back and forth through the designated pedestrian realm without interruption. The shell material also causes vehicles to generate dust as they accelerate or stop which adds to poor visibility for the users. Additionally, the overall aesthetic quality of the study area is hindered by the dominating scale of transmission and distribution power poles that line both sides of the corridor, as well as the visual clutter created by commercial and regulatory signage that has been designed to be visible to high-speed vehicles.

The US 1 Enhancement Plan identifies tools and techniques that maybe used to help convert portions of the high speed rural highway from conditions designed primarily for cars to move through into recognizable community locations that supports more livable conditions characterized by comfortable pedestrian realms and well-defined public places.

Four Focal Areas

There are several unique locations along the highway that are of importance to the community. These focal areas have evolved over time and represent important physical locations and uses where residents and visitors alike tend to congregate for regular services, and include:

- Florida Keys Gateway Area - Located at Mile Marker 106, this is the "arrival" point on Key Largo after passing through the 18-mile Stretch. The road-section transitions from the narrow two- and three lane section on the Stretch to a 100-foot plus ROW including planted center medians. The Key Largo Chamber of Commerce and Welcome Center is located here and underutilized commercial/retail properties that could be improved as part of a recognizable gateway.
- Government and Cultural Center at the Quay - Located at Mile Marker 103, this property site is a former restaurant on the bayside of the island that was recently purchased by the County to become the home of a variety of new civic and cultural uses.
- Tradewinds Plaza - Located at Mile Marker 102, this major commercial/retail area was developed and preserves native hammock buffering the right-of-way, and provides significant services to the community near the signalized intersection of US 1 and Tradewinds Boulevard.
- Waldorf Plaza - Located at Mile Marker 100 - this is the major commercial/retail area of Key Largo. US 1 transitions from a 4-lane divided with median cross-section to a directional flow system. Key Largo's cultural downtown area includes small businesses, services, and tourist stops near the signalized intersection of US 1 and Atlantic Boulevard.

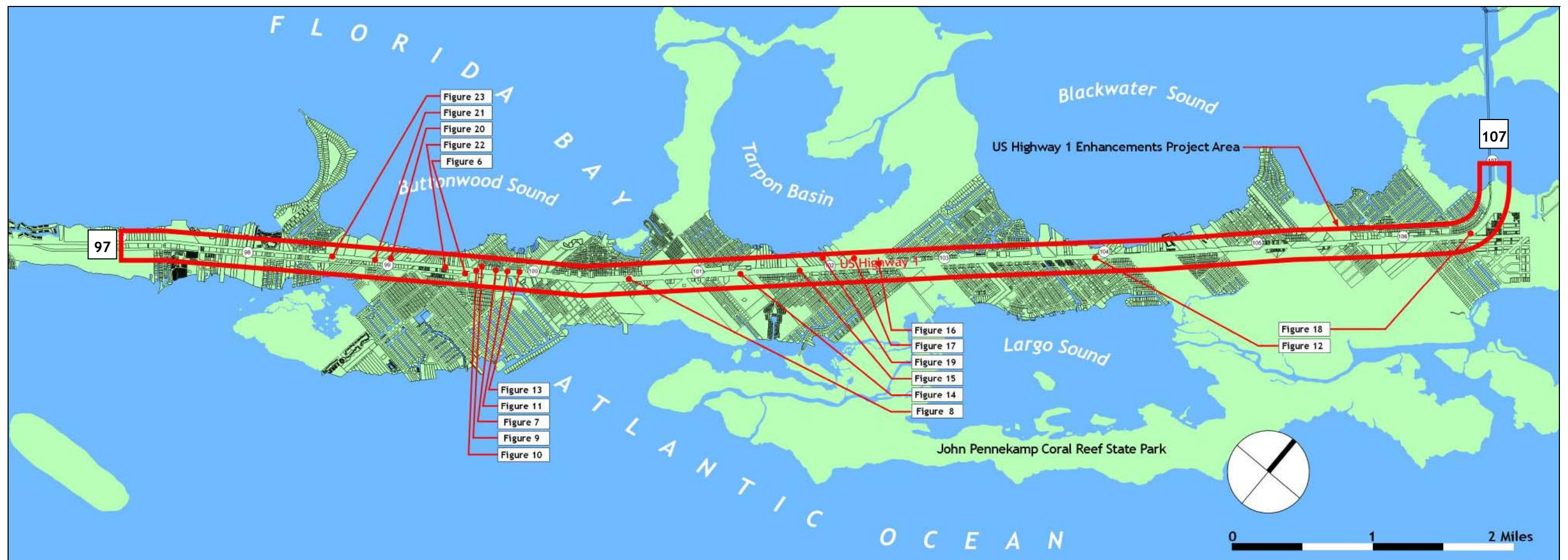


Figure 5 Study Area

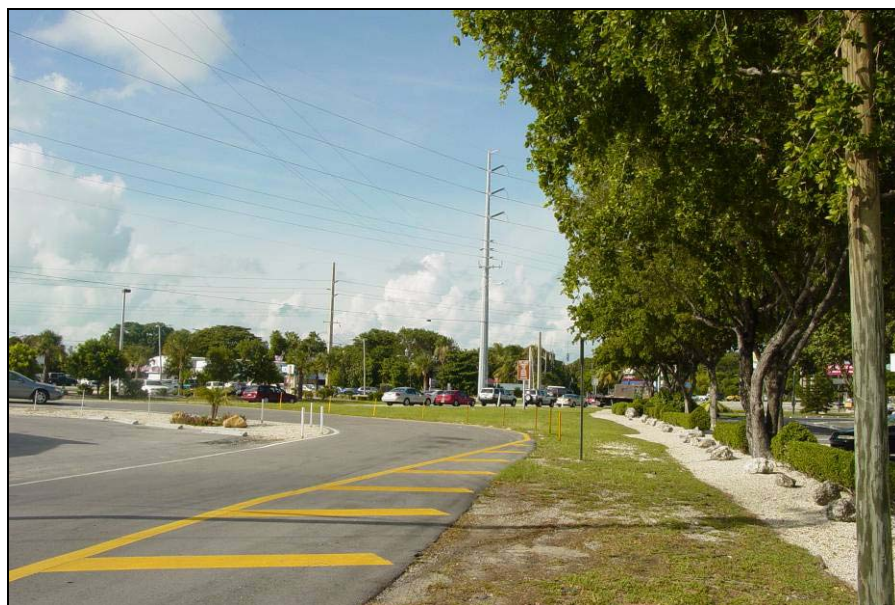


Figure 6 Key Largo's Downtown has a Deficient Pedestrian Infrastructure



Figure 8 The Highway's Perspective is Dominated by the Power Line Poles



Figure 10 The Highway's Main Intersection in Downtown Key Largo

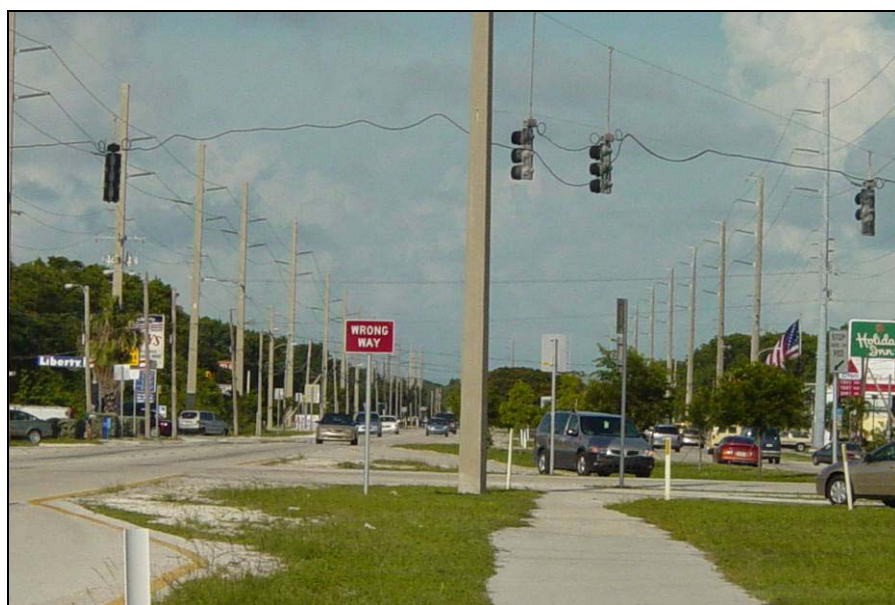


Figure 7 Bike Path Crossing at Downtown Key Largo



Figure 9 The Bike Path and Sidewalk Design is Inadequate, Street Furniture is Minimal



Figure 11 The Rural Section of the Highway: 4 Lane-Divided Without Curbs



Figure 12 The Distinction between Pedestrian and Vehicular Realms is Weak



Figure 14 The Medians are Adequately Landscaped



Figure 16 Commercial Uses Rely on Signage Rather Than Architecture to Create Identity



Figure 13 Signage on the Highway is not Coordinated



Figure 15 Turn Lanes and Refuges Allow for Cross Traffic



Figure 17 This Hurricane-Proof Telecommunications Tower is a Landmark



Figure 18 The Gateway to the Keys is a Non-descript Highway Intersection



Figure 20 Section of the Highway at MM 99



Figure 22 The Bike Path/Sidewalk Blurs into the Vehicular Realm



Figure 19 The Quay has the Potential to Become a Main Attraction. Pedestrian Improvements would be needed to Connect the Site to the Community



Figure 21 Parking Areas for Commercial Uses are Contiguous to the Highway



Figure 23 The Tropical Climate Allows for Lush Landscaping

Opportunities & Constraints

Residents of the Key Largo community who attended the public design workshops participated in a community analysis exercise that included Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) process. Figure 24 illustrates a selection of the top consensus issues depicting major opportunities and constraints that exist within the study area. The number one strength is the small town atmosphere that residents want to preserve and enhance. Key Largo is perceived as a safe place to live, due in part to this character. Design enhancements are needed to reinforce positive and remedy negative conditions. The next major consensus strength comprised a list of the natural assets of the Florida Keys including the lush native vegetation of the hammocks, the John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park and the pristine location of the future Government and Cultural Center at the Quay property located on the Tarpon Basin (Figure 25). These strengths and Key Largo’s strategic location as the first key within the island chain are viewed as major assets.

The major constraints of Key Largo and the US 1 corridor relate mostly to the aesthetics of the highway and the lack of a strong identifying image for the community. Traffic congestion was listed as a constraint. While this is not a unique problem to Key Largo, the study area does experience difficulties that most communities do not, in that US 1 is the only roadway that runs the length of the community, and it must function as a high-speed “through” road for visitors and as a lower-speed “main street” for residents and locals. Add the high mandated design speed and the large number of unfamiliar travelers to this condition and the sensitivity of the residents to traffic congestion in the study area is better understood. The community lacks access to a local circulator public transit system and an associated land use policy that permits creation of developed areas with workforce housing and denser concentration of services. It is perceived that the rapidly escalating cost of living, the demanding restrictions for coastal development and higher taxes have pushed workforce housing out of the Florida Keys. The Keys are being left with the less than desirable situation

of housing its workforce outside of the community and the continuing the cycle of increasing costs.



Figure 25 Waterfront on Tarpon Basin

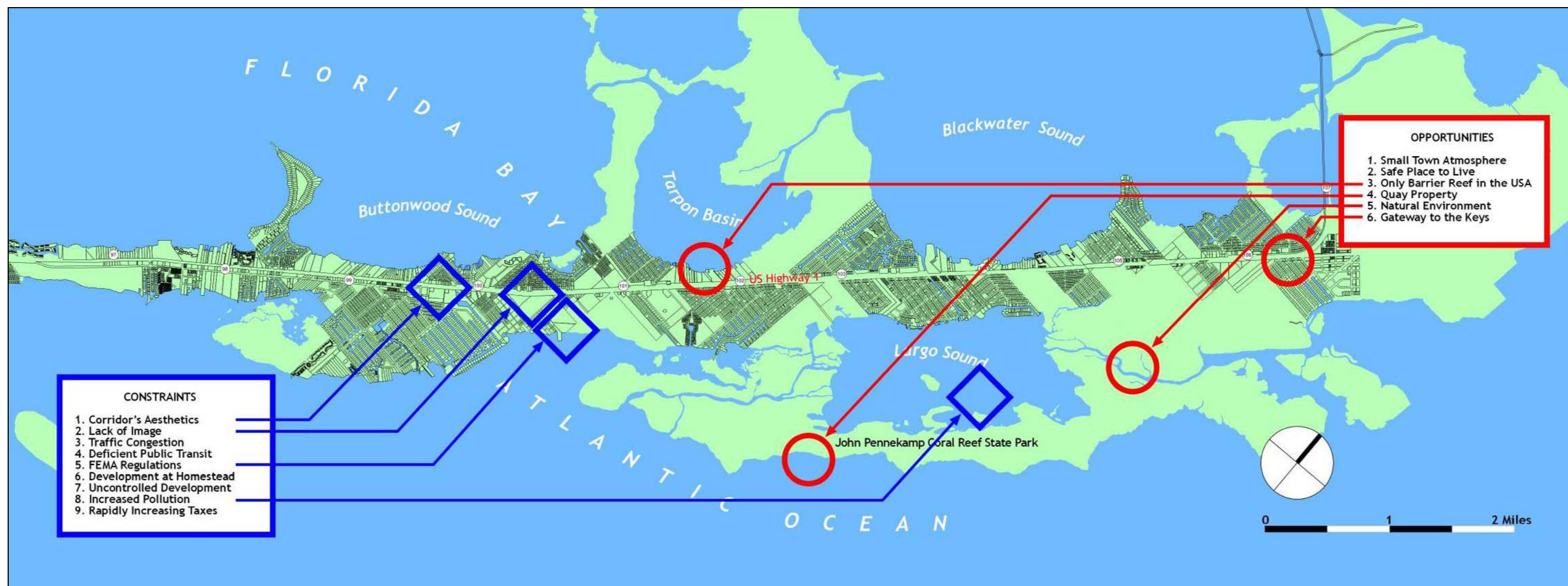


Figure 24 Opportunities and Constraints

Downtown Key Largo (MM100)

Downtown Key Largo is in the southern end of the study area at approximately Mile Marker 100 (Figure 26). It is the commercial center of the Upper Keys. The proposed overlay district is the core of the downtown and extends from Laguna Avenue to Ocean Bay Dr. (Figure 27). Downtown represents the best opportunity to create some urban space because of the proximity of several land uses, making it viable for truly mixed use (Figure 28).



Figure 26 Location of Downtown Key Largo

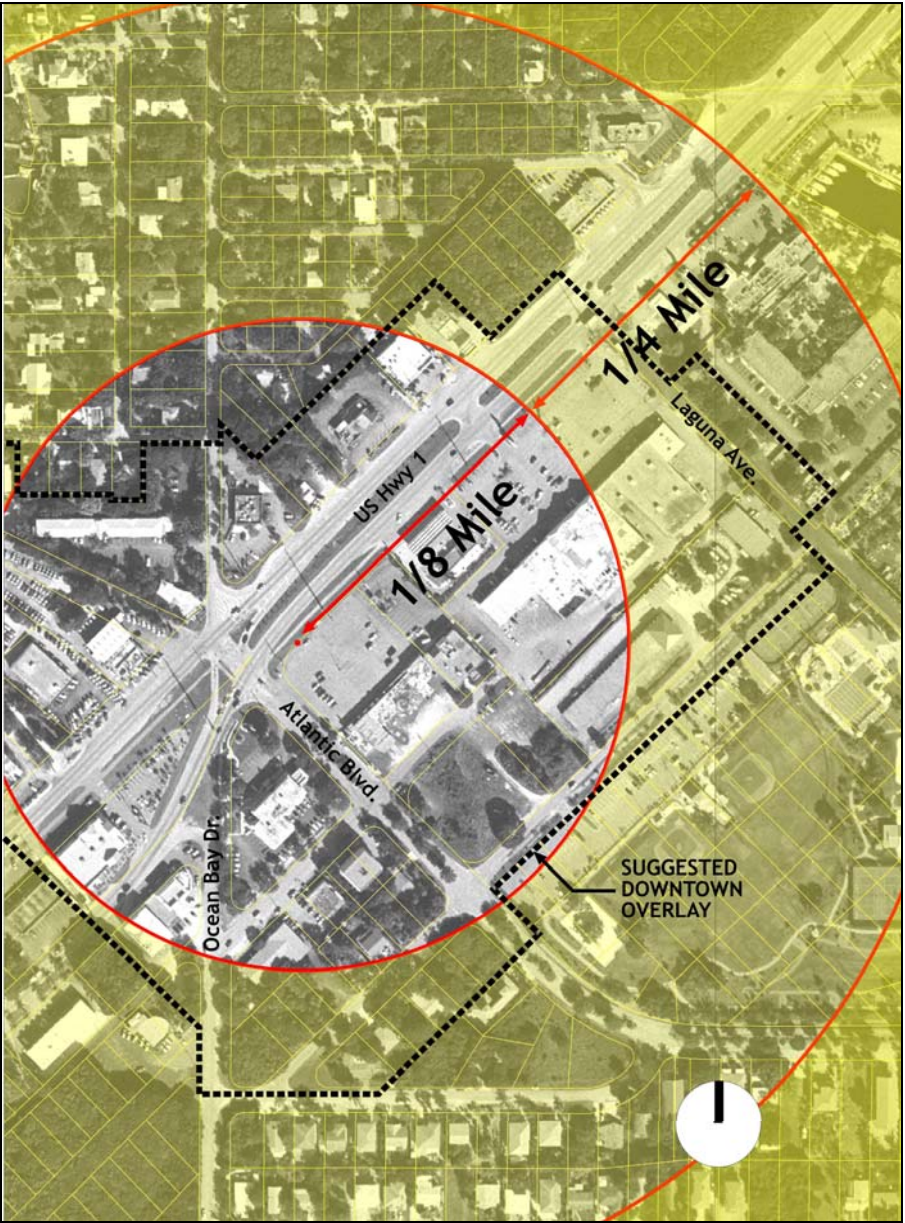


Figure 27 Downtown Key Largo

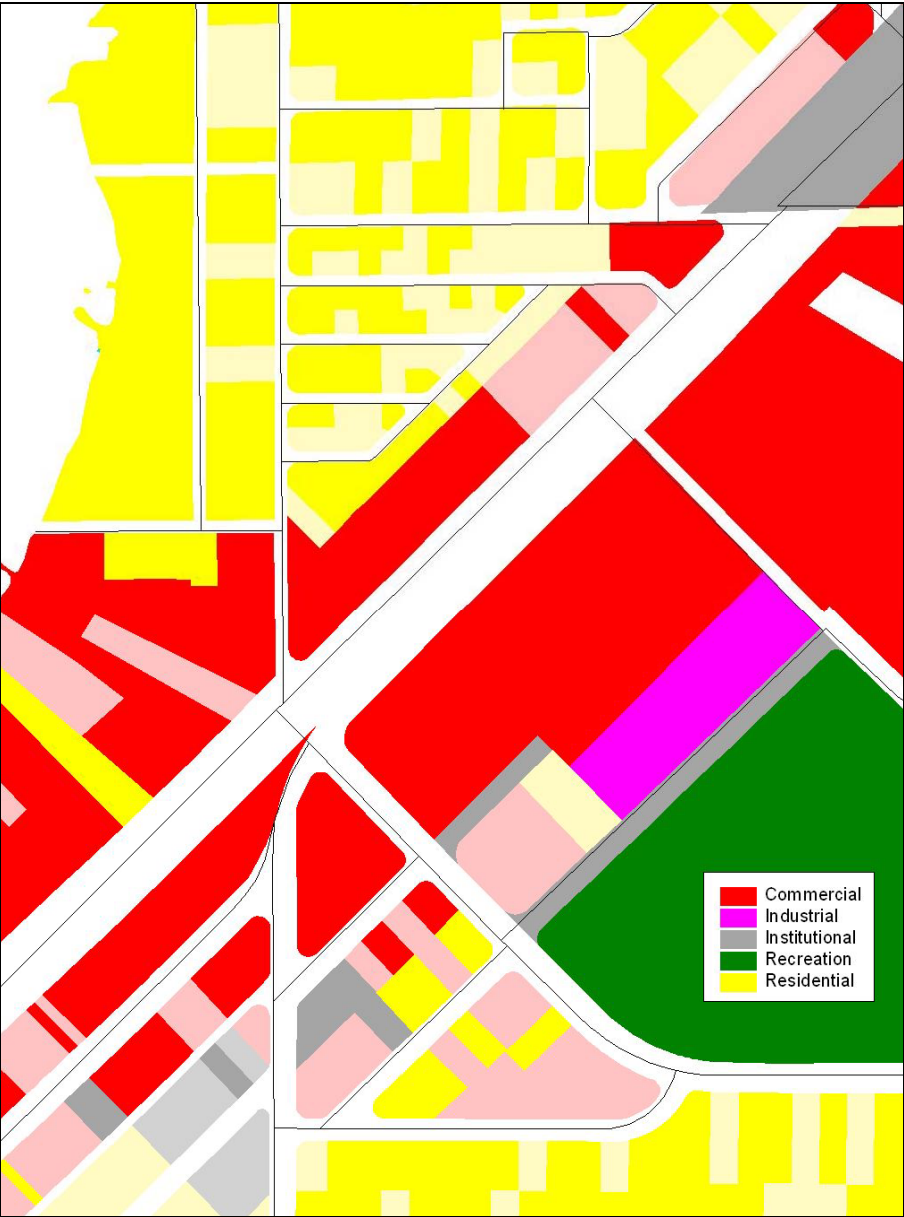


Figure 28 Downtown Key Largo Land Use

Government and Cultural Center at the Quay and Tradewinds Plaza

The Quay is the site, and name, of a former popular destination nestled between the water front of Tarpon Basin and US 1 (Figure 29).

There are two suggested overlay districts for the Quay and the Tradewinds Plaza which include parcels across US 1 from the two target areas (Figure 30).

The land use composition is predominantly commercial and miscellaneous uses on the properties fronting US 1; the rest of the land that is not yet developed carries a residential land use designation (Figure 31).



Figure 29 Location of the Quay and Tradewinds Plaza

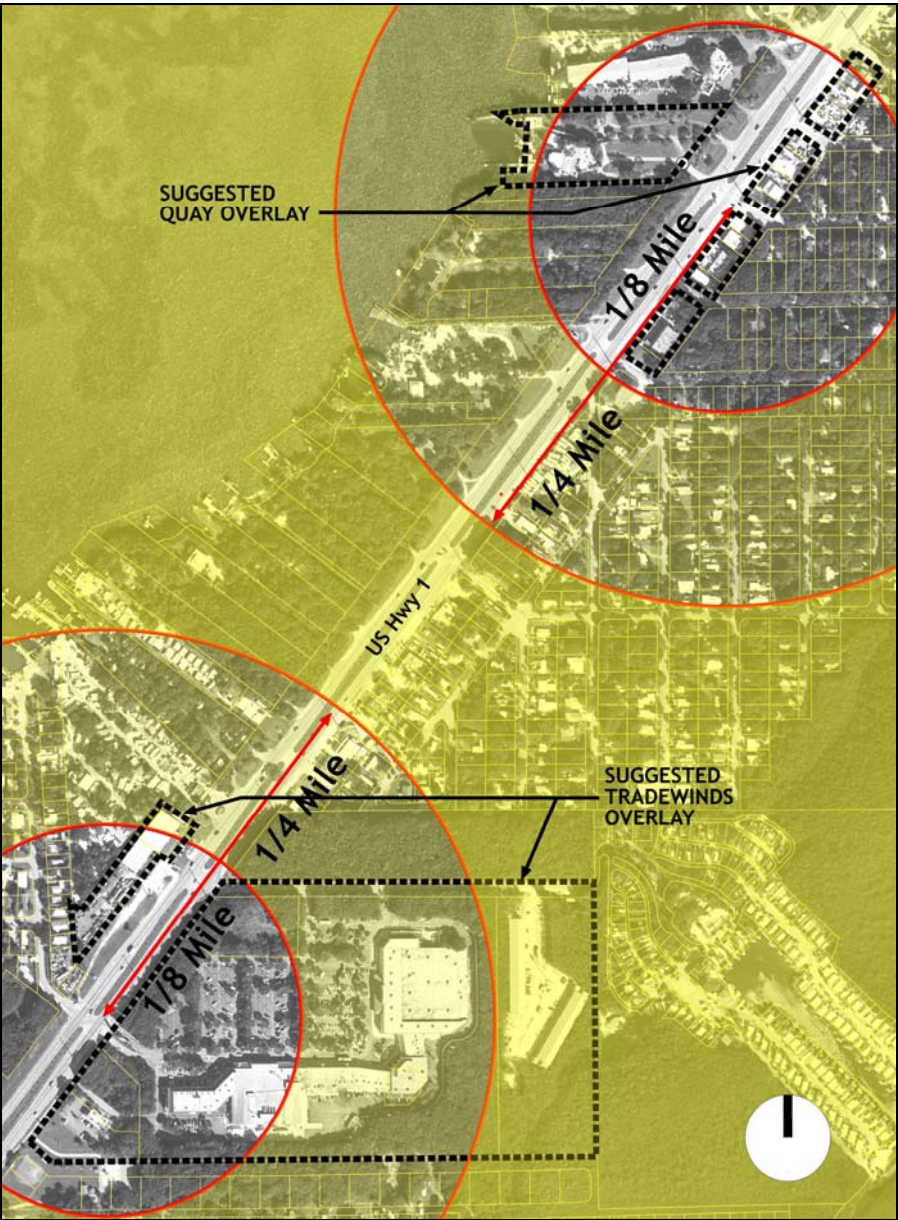


Figure 30 Quay Focal Area

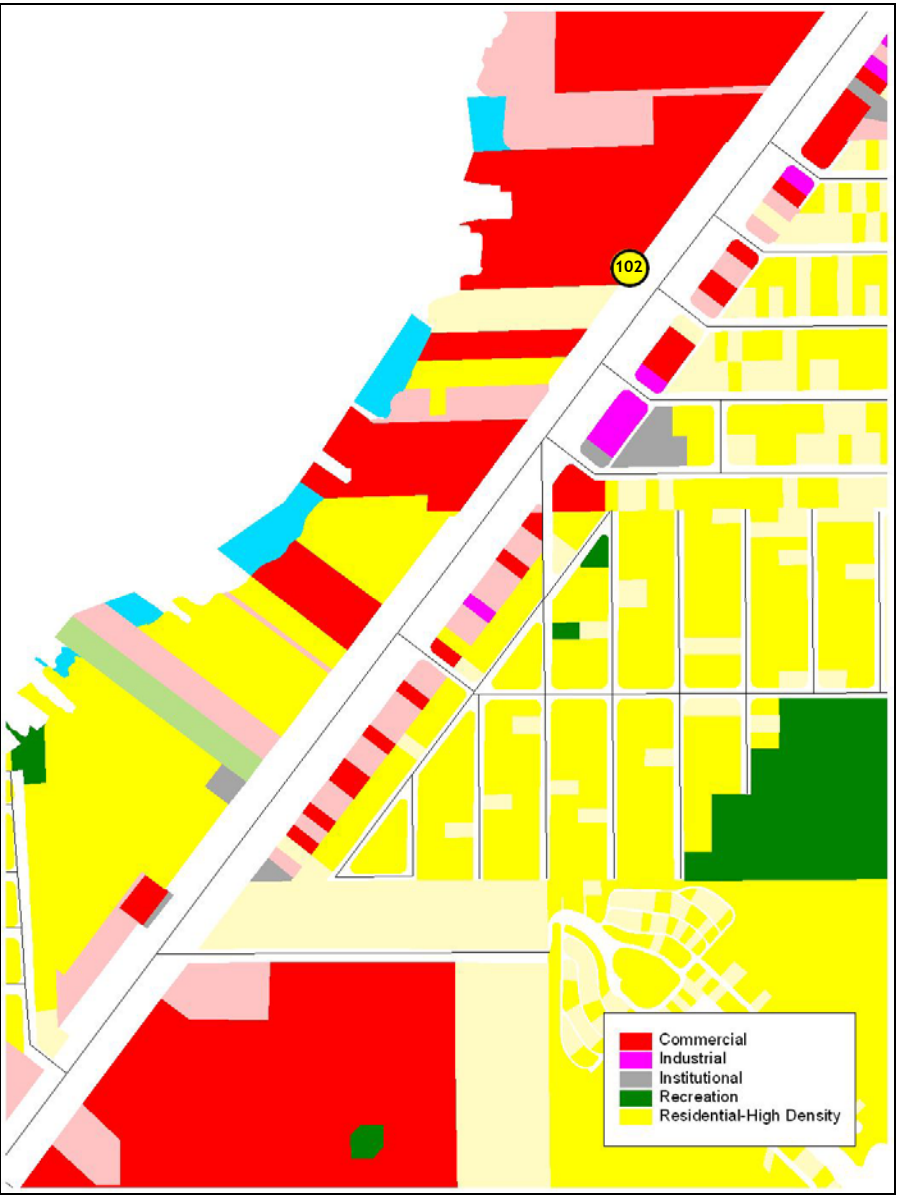


Figure 31 Quay Focal Area Land Use

Gateway Focal Area

The gateway is the first stop in the sequence from the main land into the Florida Keys; it is located at the uppermost side of Key Largo at Mile Marker 106 (Figure 32). The proposed overlay district straddles both sides of the highway. On the Bay side, adjacent to the southbound lanes is the visitor center and other commercial uses. On the ocean-side adjacent to the northbound lanes is a mobile home park (Figure 33). The land use composition for properties fronting US 1 is predominantly commercial or miscellaneous uses; the land that has yet to be developed carries a predominantly residential land use designation (Figure 34).



Figure 32 Location of the Gateway Focal Area

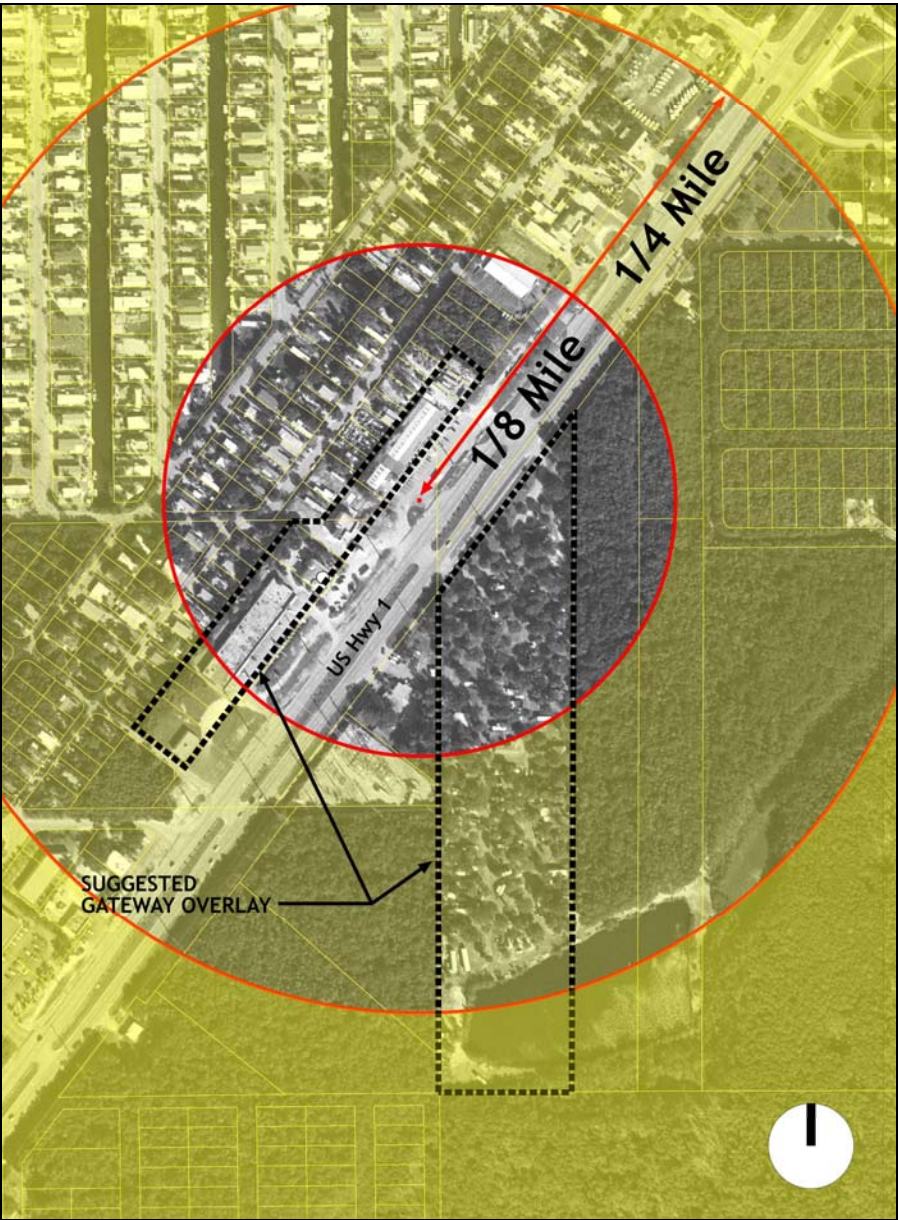


Figure 33 Gateway Focal Area

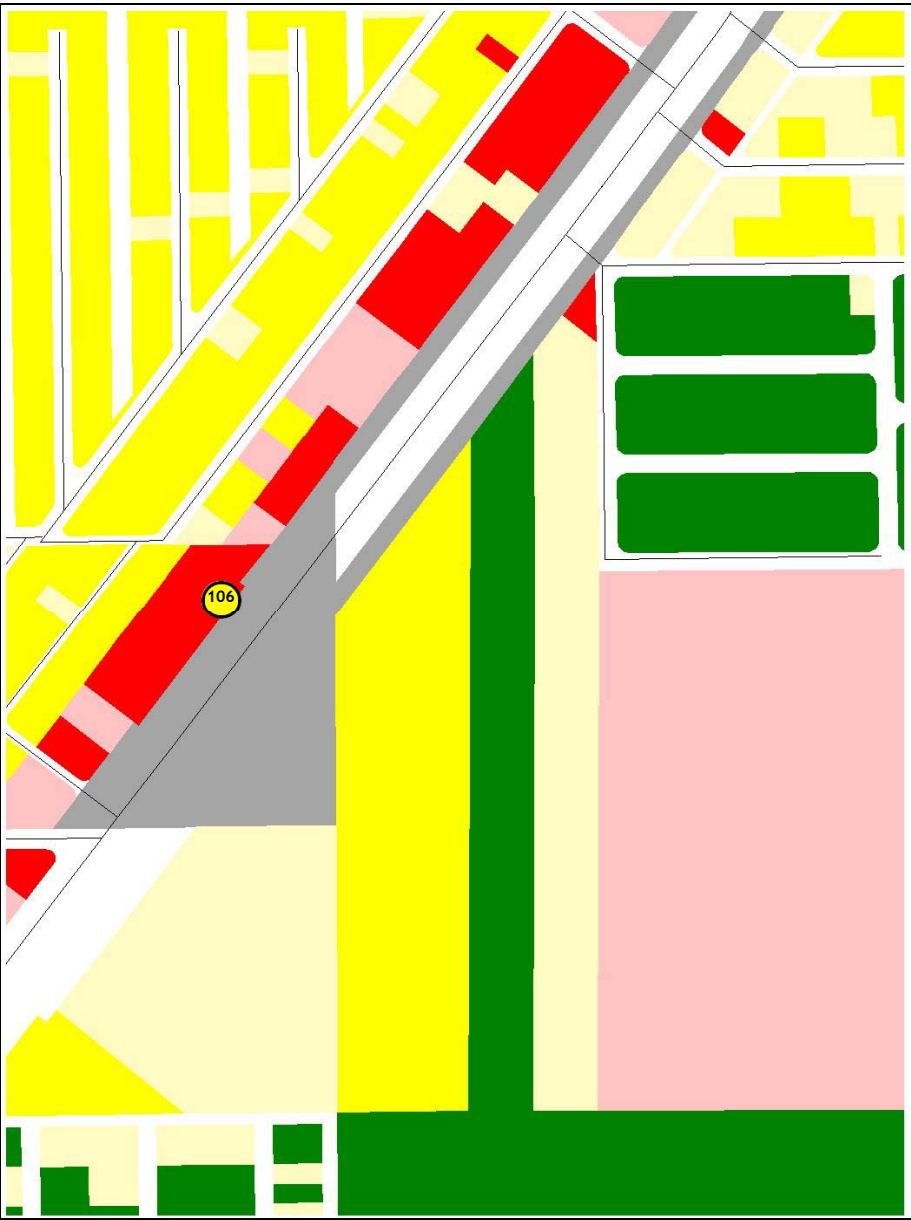


Figure 34 Gateway Focal Area Land Use

3. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

In any community-driven planning process, effective and meaningful public participation is necessary to ensure that the consultants fully understand the local conditions and that the formation of plan concepts occurs as part of a consensus-building mechanism. The KL-LCP included multiple opportunities for public participation, and varying techniques were used to provide the greatest opportunity for community input into the project. At each step of the project, consensus voting occurred that assisted in identifying the major issues or concerns of the participants.

The process included:

- Stakeholders Interviews
- A Community Survey
- Newsletters Website, and
- Public Meetings

The stakeholder interviews were conducted with interested community members at different intervals throughout the project. During that time, four newsletters to inform and notify the community were also written and issued. Similarly, a website link to the project was posted by the county at www.monroecounty-fl.gov. In addition, the County distributed a Community Survey to all property owners (8,560) within the Key Largo study area. The responses were compiled and analyzed, and the findings reported in the Key Largo Livable CommuniKeys Plan.

A series of public meetings took place during the project. These meetings were located within Key Largo, were legally noticed, and were open for all interested persons to attend. Two identical meetings were held at each public meeting session to permit greater attendance. The first meeting would occur from 4:30-6:30PM, and the second meeting would occur from 7:00 to 9PM of the same day.

Visioning Workshop #1 - The first workshop was held, Tuesday, July 27, 2004 at the Lion's Club. This workshop focused on the formation of a cohesive vision for the Key Largo area. The Monroe County Planning Department and consultant, HDR, hosted the workshop. Two identical workshops were held Tuesday night to provide the opportunity for all interested citizens to attend and to facilitate collaboration between local officials and the community.

Participants broke into self-selected groups and were asked to help identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

(SWOT) that pertain to Key Largo. Once each participant identified their personal SWOTs, a facilitator for each group highlighted the major topics for each category. The topics were posted so that each participant could vote for the two most important or critical items listed for each section in order to help establish a major consensus.

Goals and Strategies Workshop #2 - The second workshop was held October 6, 2004 also at the Lion's Club (Figure 35). This meeting was rescheduled from an earlier date in September due to concerns about the potential landfall of Hurricane Frances. The workshop was conducted as a goal exercise based upon results of the first visioning workshop, existing conditions, and the Monroe County Comprehensive Plan. Each participant was given a sheet with seven goal elements: Future Land Use, Conservation and Coastal Management, Transportation, Public Facilities, Recreation and Open Space, Cultural Resources, and Housing. For each, participants were asked to identify and list priority goals. Once the goals were identified, they were aggregated, and each participant was given the chance to vote for the goal that he or she felt was the most important to achieve.



Figure 35 Planning and Design at a Community Meeting

The consensus Goals and Objectives identified at the workshop include; aesthetic guidelines for buildings and landscape, sidewalks on both sides of US 1, a welcome center with eco-tourism information, and an annual festival for Key Largo. The complete results of the workshop are found in the Appendix section.

US Highway 1 Design Workshop #3 - The third workshop was held October 7-8, 2004 at the Lion's Club. The workshop was conducted to generate general ideas for the US 1 corridor, to locate specific redevelopment areas, and create conceptual design guidelines and improvements for the island of Key Largo. The participants viewed a presentation specifically geared towards focusing on design elements found in other communities which are similar to Key Largo. The presentation allowed the participants to examine design elements that might be applicable to their community and also gave the consultants an opportunity to develop graphic images of the residents' visions for the future.

The results of the workshop included the identification of three community focal points in Key Largo; Island Gateway (MM 106), Government and Cultural Center (MM 102) and Waldorf Plaza/Downtown (MM 100). The Island Gateway located at the entrance to the Florida Key provides a unique opportunity to expand on the existing Chamber of Commerce welcome center. The establishment of a cohesive architectural theme based upon the welcome center building architecture is envisioned.

The Government and Cultural Center at the Quay is another significant opportunity to help establish Key Largo identity. The purchase of this property was finalized during the project study and it is hoped that this acreage will provide increased access to government services and public uses. The initial designs feature a Keys architectural vernacular with metal roofs and Bahama shutters. A pleasing village style is created using multiple, smaller buildings.

The Waldorf Plaza/Downtown area was identified as a significant focal area for the island of Key Largo. The proposed design concept incorporates traditional, conch-style architecture into a walkable downtown where businesses are accessible to pedestrians from the sidewalk and the ensemble reinforces a sense of place for the island.

Findings Workshop #4 - The fourth public meeting occurred on January 20, 2005. During this meeting the project team identified the major findings contained within the Draft Plan and solicited input into the identified strategies. These findings will continue to evolve during plan revisions and the public review and approval process.

4. DESIGN CONCEPTS

The vision for the US 1 corridor puts forward the creation or the enhancement of the public pedestrian realm in Key Largo. Because there are a few locations where the pedestrian infrastructure is adequate, the question about where to prioritize action arises. There is a national trend towards increased pedestrian accommodation. People are increasingly walking for recreation, to improve their health, for exercise or to just meet neighbors. We've taken to the sidewalks, the gym, the track, greenway trails and sometimes to the street itself to get in our daily walk. The island geography and past decades of development have provided little interconnectivity within Key Largo. Due to the sprawling development pattern, the distances between uses generally obviate walking as a reasonable mobility option.

Some policies need to be adopted to improve the pedestrian connectivity and to highlight the urban quality of destinations:

- Improve the Overseas Highway Heritage Trail bicycle route alignment.
- Increase general awareness of this facility through enhanced treatments and signage.
- Provide a network of secondary sidewalks connected to the trail and bicycle routes. Provide sidewalks within the focal areas.
- Include sidewalks in all future roadway improvement projects.
- Require new development to create functionally linked sidewalk sections as part of plan approval process.
- Enhance roadway design treatments to pulse vehicular traffic within important focal areas.

The community workshops produced a consensus on four places as focal areas that are destinations for locals as well as for visitors. These locations can be characterized by an urban feeling where pedestrian access is equally important to vehicular access:

- Downtown Key Largo (MM 100),
- Tradewinds Plaza (MM101.5),
- Government and Cultural Center at the Quay (MM 102), and
- Gateway Area (MM106).

Monroe County should work towards the installation of pedestrian facilities, sidewalks, greenways, or other pedestrian amenities. In addition Monroe County should:

1. Create an overlay district for the Downtown Key Largo area that permits the enhanced design of US 1. Also, increase the pedestrian infrastructure, improve the trail bicycle route alignment and signage, provide incentives for enhanced development, create an island appropriate landscape and architecture identity, organize commercial signage, and create a parking strategy.
2. Provide for a mixed-use development overlay for the Quay focal area that would permit the development of buildings with more than one use. Also, provide for enhanced pedestrian connectivity by creating and or extending sidewalks, create a US 1 frontage road, and a landscape and architecture identity.
3. Create an overlay district for the Gateway area that would support its identity as a gateway to the Florida Keys. Also, permit mixed-use development, create a frontage road, and create a landscape and architecture identity.
4. Create architectural design guidelines for focal areas, and,

5. Create design guidelines for the remaining rural segments of the US 1 Highway.

The design guidelines that follow do not propose to eliminate existing development regulations; rather they are an overlay of rules to exact a general type of development seen as desirable for Key Largo. The overlay is intended to promote good urbanism that is supported by the free market. Incentives should be considered to increase willingness to abide by the proposed regulations including; use of streamlined permitting and public-private partnerships for infrastructure improvements and funding.

In addition to the changes in the urban form at the several identified focal areas, changes to the roadway section are expected to improve the flow of traffic and the pedestrian connectivity.

Highlighted in yellow (figure 36) are the segments where changes to the road's section are suggested. These changes include modification to the road's section but not to the alignment of the right-of-way. The segments highlighted in green do not see road section changes but include improved bike path and sidewalks as a general rule.

Design concepts for the four focal areas are based on the consensus that these places are destination points along the highway and that their transformation would be a catalyst to help improving the character of the highway and the users' experience.

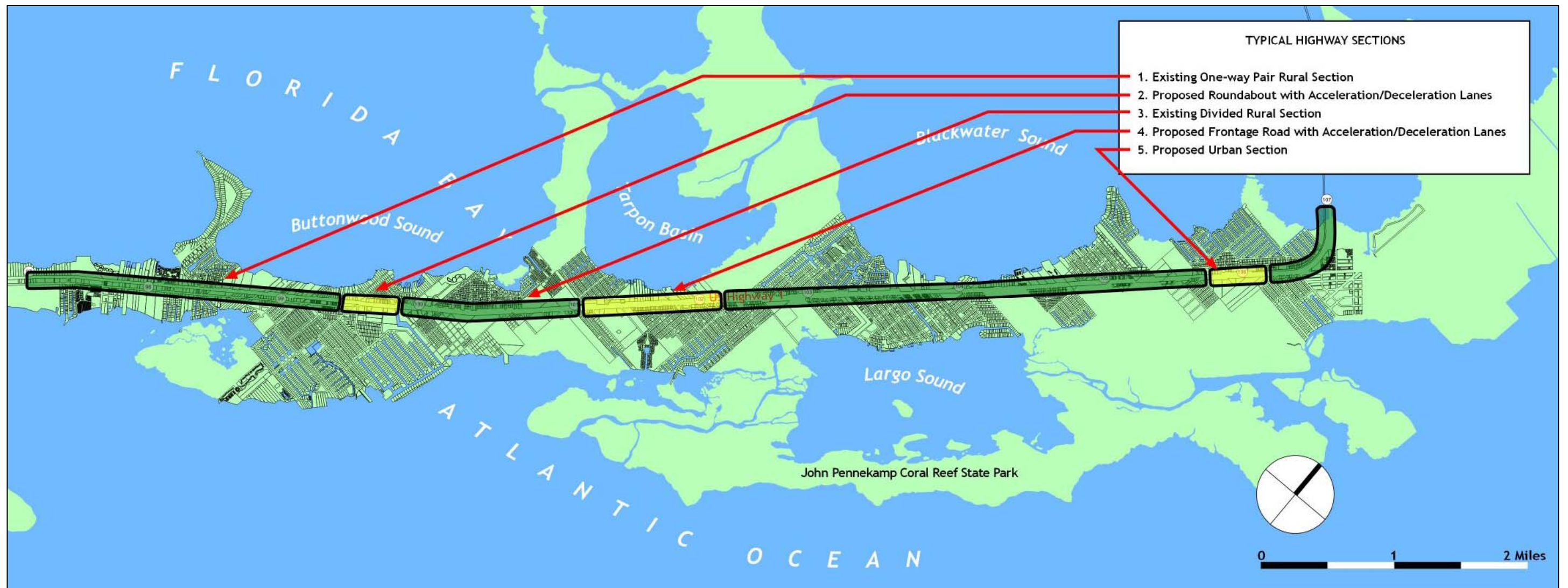


Figure 36 Typical Highway Sections

Downtown Key Largo (MM 100)

Downtown Key Largo is perceived by most community members as the town center for the entire Upper Keys. Its current commercial and retail establishments can serve as the basis for a transformation into a multiple-use district where offices, commerce, recreation and residential uses come together to create a balanced and livable place. During the community workshops, two options were created; these differ primarily in the placement and amount of redevelopment, the reorganization of the public infrastructure, and their approach to the highway frontage (Figure 37).

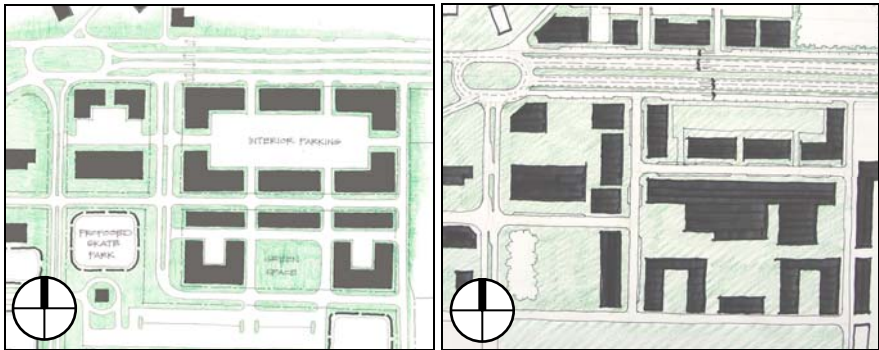


Figure 37 Alternative Development Options for Downtown

The redevelopment of downtown is envisioned to follow the urban design principle of bringing buildings as close as possible to their front lot lines, with their front entrances addressing the fronting street. The center of the blocks is to be used for parking, but parking can also be accommodated on any street. This is important to create a definable public realm that is adjacent to the US 1 corridor and where increased pedestrian accommodation can occur. Redevelopment of existing residential uses is needed, and in places such as on St. Croix Place, this can be achieved by assembling some of the narrow lots into wider ones to accommodate multi-family buildings. New multifamily properties should include accommodations for affordable rents for moderate-income families by allowing a mixture of market-rate and workforce housing. Commercial and office uses can be located in the first block from US Highway 1. Outdoor cafés in strategic locations such as prominent corners are encouraged. The County’s skate park can become the downtown’s “living room” by making it a pedestrian friendly and accessible place. Figure 38 illustrates some of these concepts as they were conceived during the community workshop.



Figure 38 Conceptual View of a Redeveloped Downtown

An enhanced design plan for the US 1 cross-section is illustrated in Figure 39. The plan proposes a two-lane roundabout design for an average speed of 35 mph, frontage roads on both side of the highway with sidewalks and connected pedestrian crossings. US

Highway 1 through traffic will continue north-south with little interruption as possible. Local traffic may divert onto the frontage roads for increased local circulation. The road alignment to the south of the roundabout remains unaltered, whereas the alignment to the north can allow for the introduction of a frontage road on each side of the highway that extends for about one half mile. Frontage roads are created to minimize the cross traffic at the roundabout. The pedestrian infrastructure is improved by providing sidewalks on all secondary streets within the location and by connecting them to the bicycle trail.

The Downtown plan (Figure 40) presents an opportunity to create an urban environment while taking advantage of the indigenous vegetation. The highway is landscaped as a boulevard, buildings are placed at the front lot line, parking is relegated to the rear and on the street, all streets include sidewalks, and a new main street is created by the redevelopment of surface parking lots and buildings at the Key Largo Waldorf Plaza.

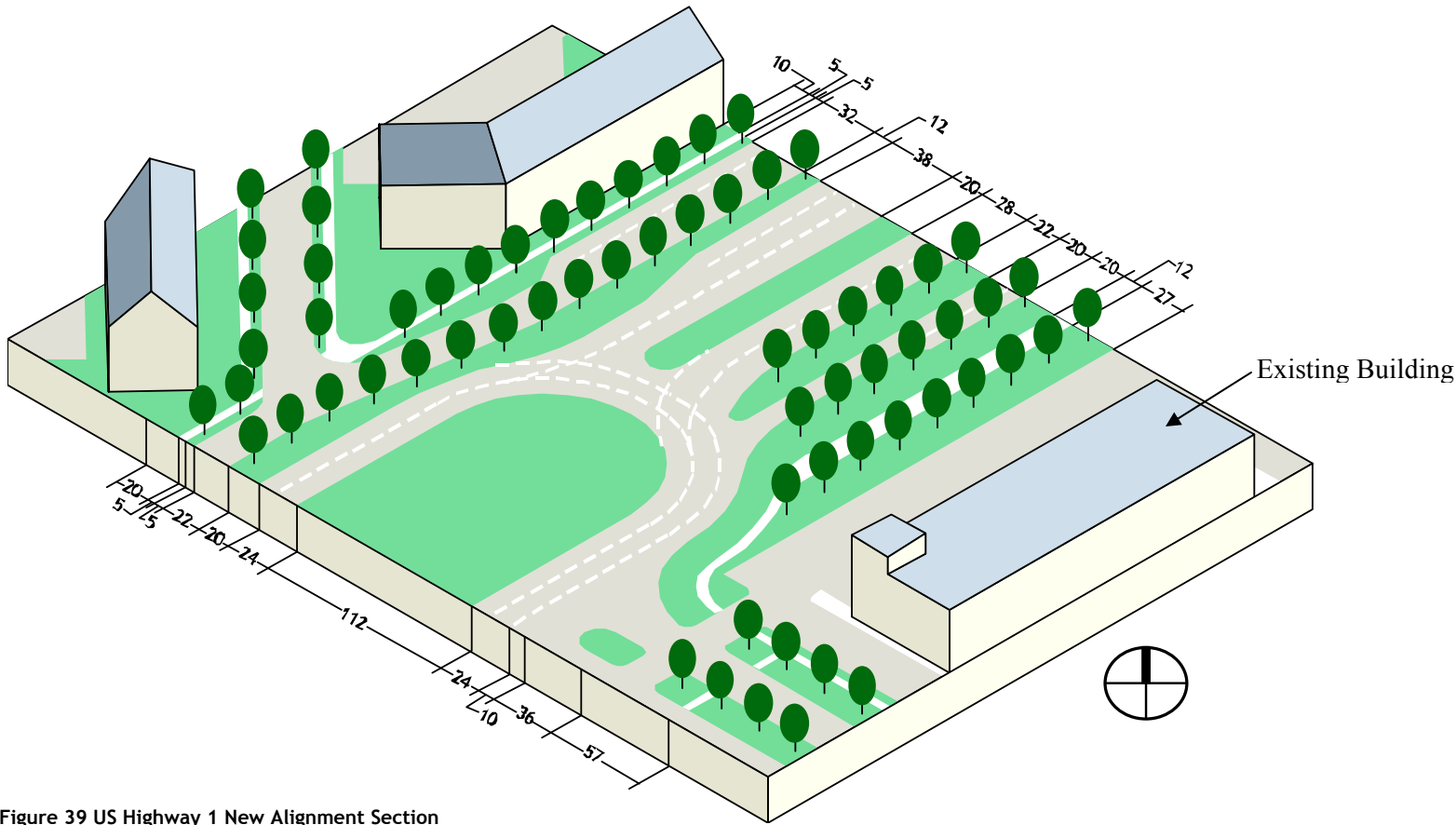


Figure 39 US Highway 1 New Alignment Section

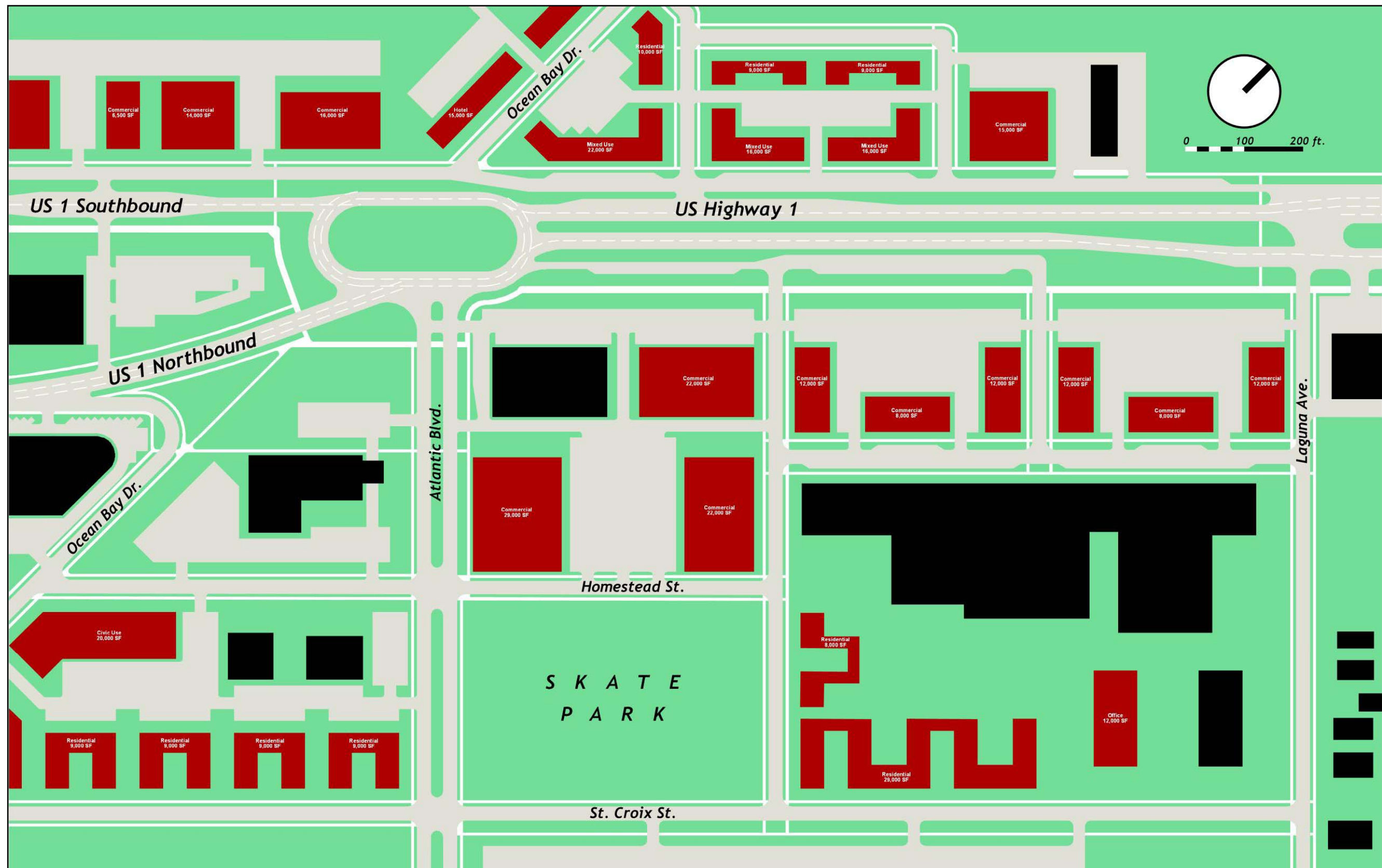


Figure 40 Downtown Key Largo Plan

Government and Cultural Center at the Quay

The Quay focal area is conceived of as the living room of the Key Largo community. Its future program includes government offices, an amphitheater, an auditorium and ancillary buildings (Figure 41).

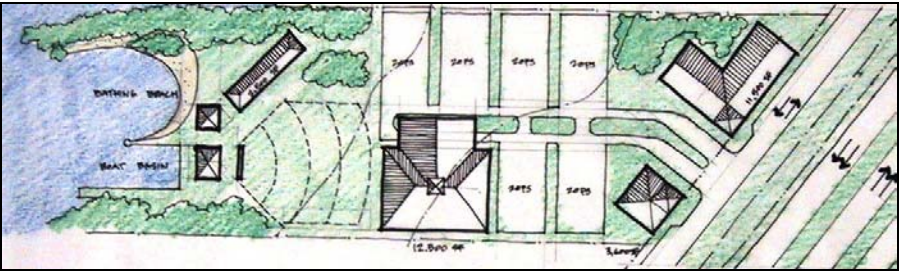


Figure 41. Government and Cultural Center at the Quay

The design of the Government and Cultural Center shall include three elements: the public face along US Highway 1, the waterfront facing Tarpon Bay, and the areas in between. The land between US 1 and the Bay steps down gradually, and includes the largest of the proposed facilities (Figure 42).



Figure 42 Quay Section

Access to the site is primarily from US 1, although the site is also accessible by boat from the water. By assigning no more than 1/3 of the site's area to surface parking, the site can accommodate 120 parking spaces. Incorporating parking into the site prevents encroachment adjacent land earmarked for conservation. However, should the demand for parking be greater than 120 spaces; the overflow can be handled with on-street parking along a newly created frontage road that runs parallel to US 1. The frontage road can also carry slower local traffic. The layout of the site improvements should create a civic campus where the government component comprises two buildings that flank the entrance to the facility (Figure 43). A combined footprint of 15,000 square feet can be easily accommodated, and a building height of two stories is recommended. These buildings should be designed to suggest the Key Largo architectural style of clapboard siding and standing seam metal roofing, detailed with Bahamas shutters,



Figure 43 Entrance to the Quay

verandas, porches, balconies and towers. Given site constraints, the auditorium can be as large as 12,000 square feet. The open air amphitheater for 300 people can be also used for events such as community festivals. The water's edge can be enhanced with uses as a café, restrooms and lockers for beach bathers, and storage for kayaks.

The roadway section from the site to the Tradewinds Plaza consists of a four-lane divided facility with two-lane single-direction frontage roads (Figure 44).

The plan for the site (Figure 45) proposes creating two frontage roads with on-street parking on either side of the highway. The frontage roads will extend about one mile to the south of the Quay site to the Tradewinds Plaza. The frontage roads will provide an opportunity for local traffic to travel at slower speeds and to make turns onto and off of the highway by using acceleration and deceleration lanes. The bicycle path will continue to be on the ocean side of the highway, however, the pedestrian network will extend to both sides of the highway; a sidewalk along the Bayside will parallel the bicycle path. Side streets will have also sidewalks, and pedestrian crossings will be marked and signalized. Whenever possible traffic lights will be placed to facilitate pedestrian crossing of the highway. The landscape will consist of native trees and will be organized to create a boulevard canopy that mutes the overpowering presence of the high tension power lines.

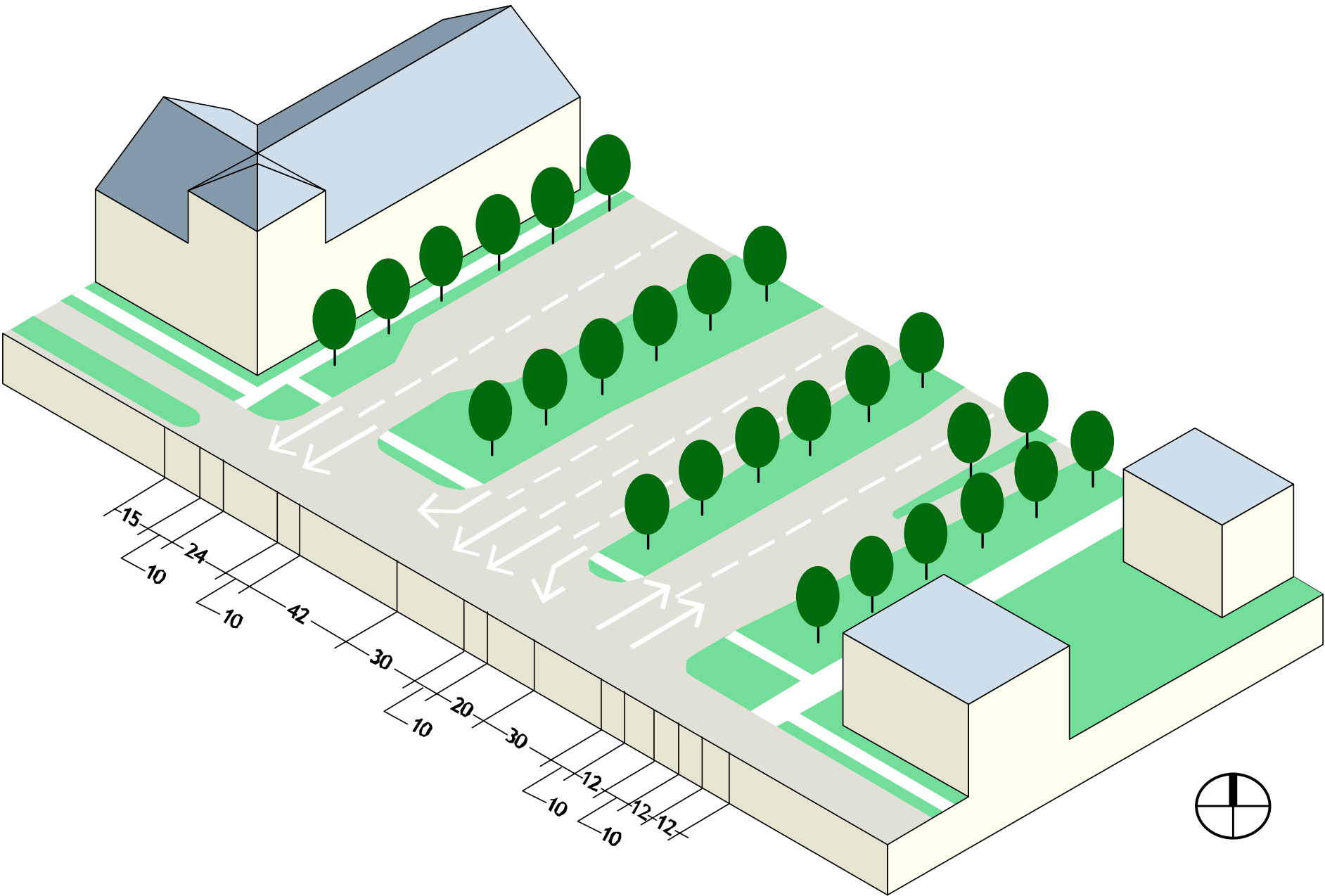


Figure 44 Highway Section at the Quay

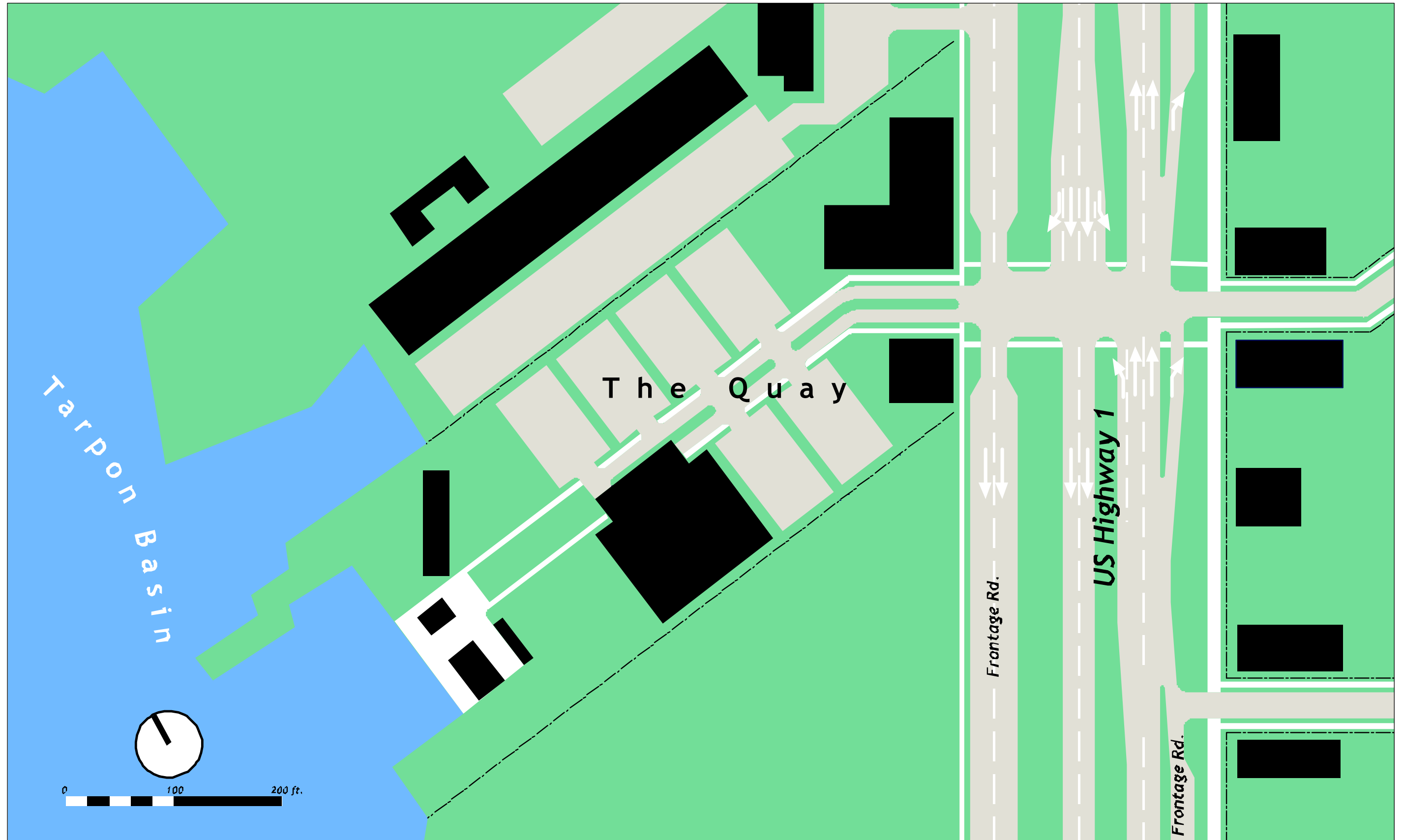


Figure 45 Quay District Plan

Gateway Focal Area

The Gateway focal area is located in a place where US 1 can be reclaimed as the Overseas Highway. The roadway’s cross-section transitions from the two-lane or three-lane section found on the 18 Mile Stretch to the 4-lane rural cross-section. The Key Largo Chamber of Commerce and Welcome Center are located here and provide important identity to the location, including appropriate architectural treatments. Adjacent to these uses are underperforming commercial/retail uses that could collectively be redeveloped as part of a district center. The US 1 corridor doesn’t have to be overburdened with design. Instead, all of the elements need to be managed comprehensively in order to reflect the intent of Key Largo. Most importantly, the highway needs to perform optimally while permitting vehicular traffic to continue to move through the system.

The Gateway focal area should be a "pit" stop for those travelers continuing to other destinations; it should also identify that visitors have arrived in the Keys, and serve as a landmark for residents of the immediate vicinity. The layout of the area is simple: while maintaining the basic 4-lane rural road cross-section, acceleration and de-acceleration lanes would be added to increase effective turning and merging movements. In addition, the wide expanse of surplus public right-of-way would be redeveloped as part of a public-private partnership to create enhanced parking and landscaping in the area. Existing commercial/retail uses would be redeveloped using architectural design guidelines to increase the identity of the area (Figure 49). Vehicular and pedestrian traffic are improved to provide easy ingress/egress to the focal area as well as the pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to serve nearby residents. Beyond the parking area there will be a landscaped buffer that increases native hammock. Connections to the residential areas adjacent to the focal area must be logical and must follow the existing road layout (Figure 50).

The master plan (Figure 50) identifies an interconnected system of streets where connections occur naturally between the focal area and the surrounding area. The architecture of the site buildings which includes clapboard siding and metal roofs can be in the same style of the architecture in the other focal areas, detailed with Bahama shutters, verandas, porches, and balconies. The use of towers, dormers and clerestories is encouraged. The aerial view (Fig. 46) includes a light house monument in the center median, with the Tourist Center in the background.



Figure 46 Gateway Focal Area

Additional options for median elements include more descriptive bronze and steel frame sculptures that convey themes relevant to Key Largo. Figures 47 and 48 represent examples of themed sculptures that may apply.

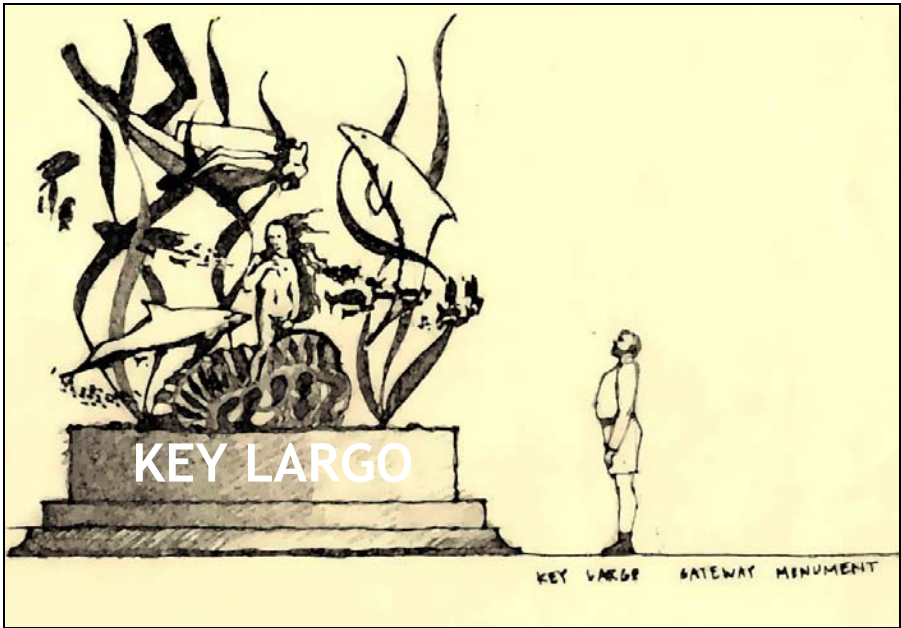


Figure 47 Gateway to the Keys Sculpture Alternative

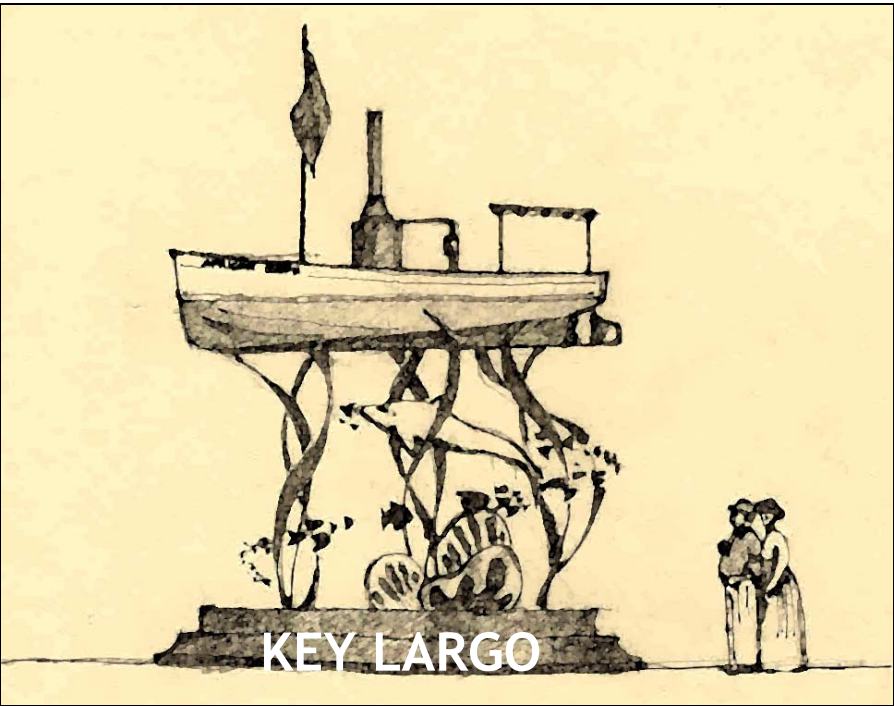


Figure 48 Gateway to the Keys Sculpture Alternative

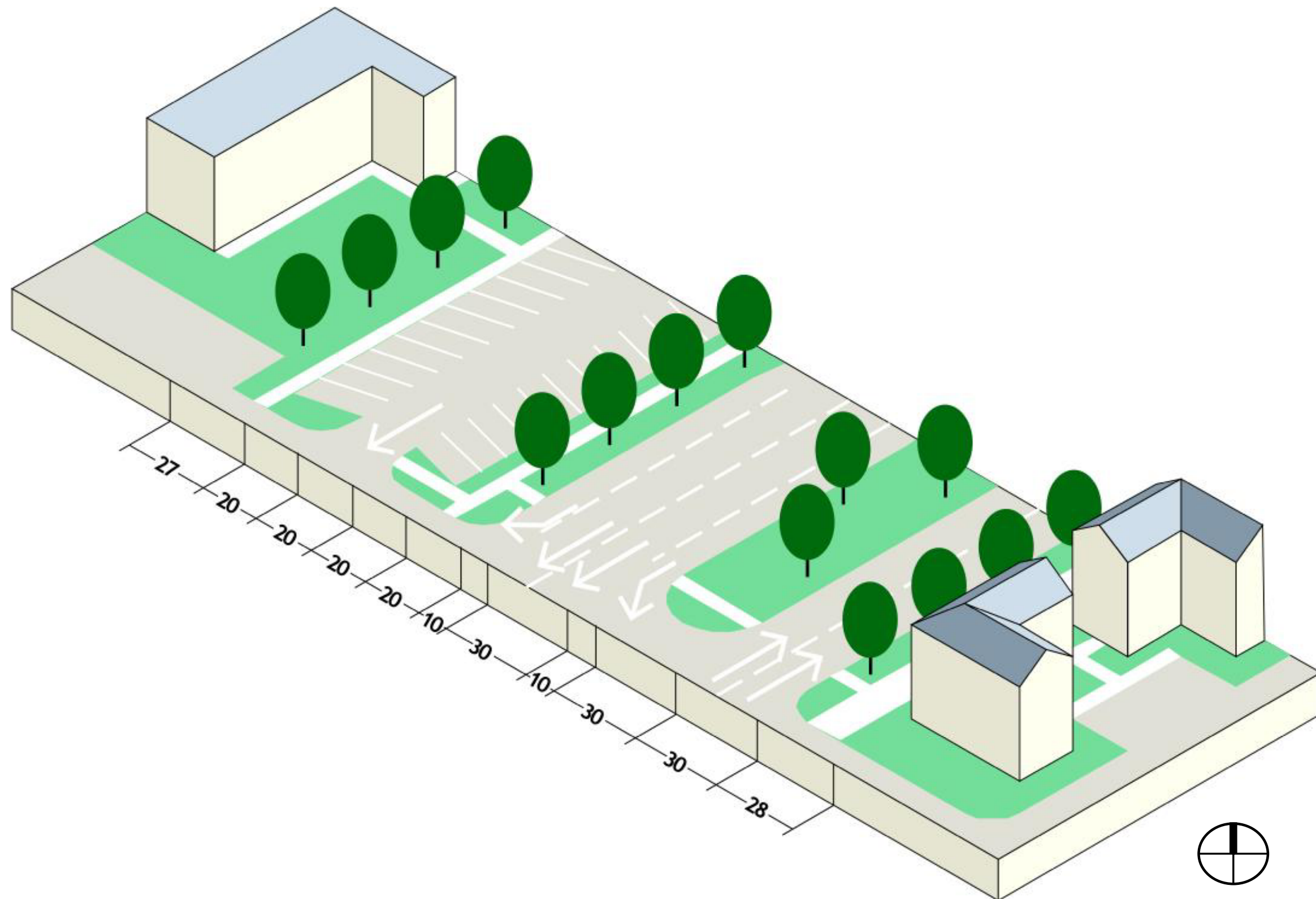


Figure 49 Gateway Community Center Section

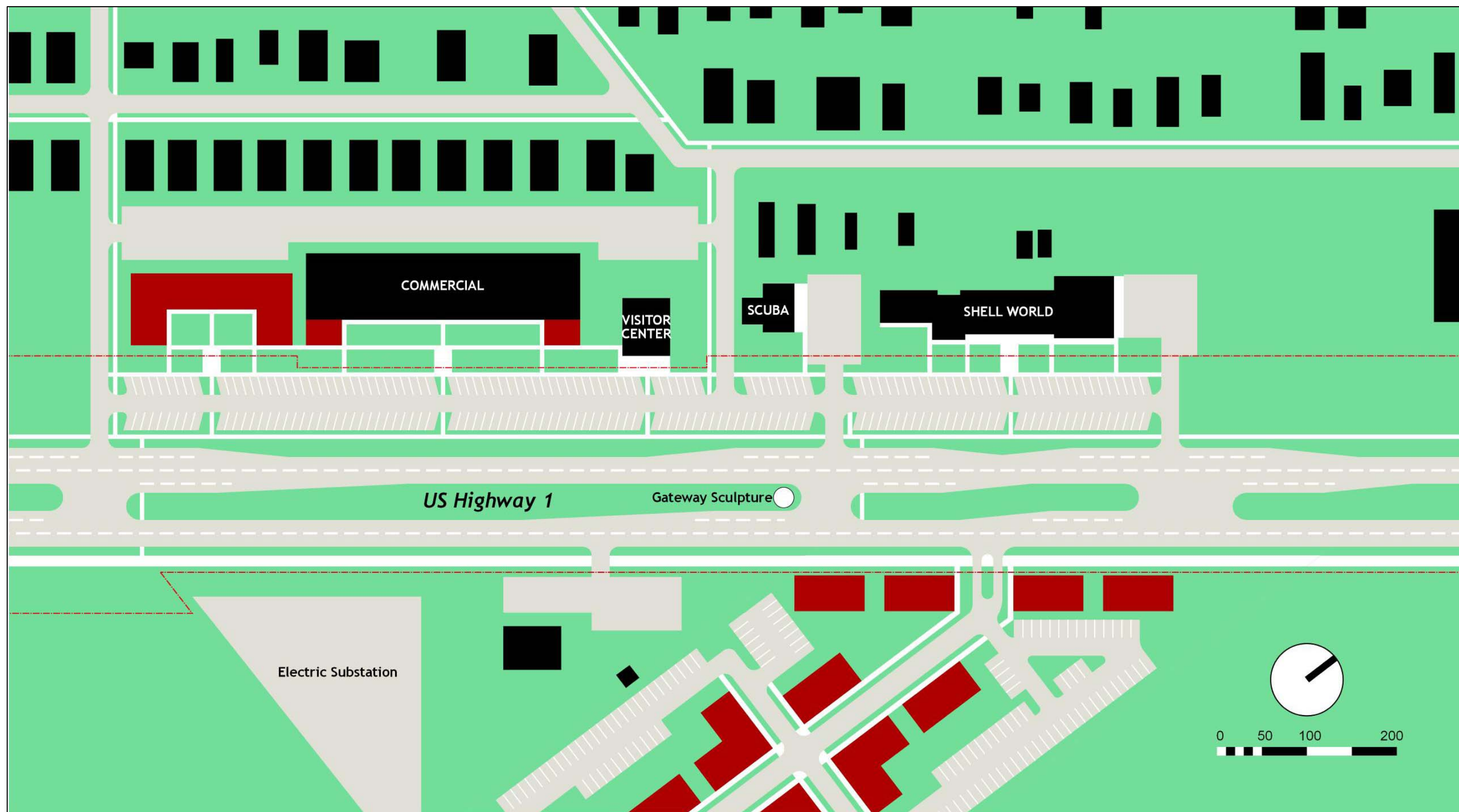


Figure 50 Gateway Focal Area Plan

5. DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Guidelines for development on the US Highway 1 Corridor are the recommendations for development in the several focal areas (Gateway, Quay and Downtown), and for typical segments of the highway. These guidelines are to be adopted by the County Commission as three overlays to the existing zoning and are to be administered by the Monroe County Planning Department as stipulated in the Monroe County Land Development Regulations (LDR). The Director of Planning, who has the duty to administer and implement the guidelines, may establish a committee to aid in the architectural review of applications for development in the overlays. The Director can review and approve permit applications for uses as-of-right and minor conditional uses in the district.

Design Guidelines will be of two kinds: guidelines for the public right-of-way and guidelines for building construction. Rules for development are given in generic terms for the four focal areas unless it is specified which focal area the rule relates to (Gateway, Quay, Tradewinds and Downtown).

Guidelines for the Public Right-of-Way
Sidewalks and Bicycle Paths

Sidewalks must be placed on both sides of the highway. Minimum sidewalk width is 5 feet. When the sidewalk is combined with a bicycle path the width is 12 feet.

Sidewalks and bicycle paths need to be signalized, to include stop signs, and marked pedestrian crossings.

In each focal area it is recommended that sidewalks be constructed of concrete, and follow ADA rules.

Civic Spaces

Civic spaces fronting onto US Highway 1 or in any of the focal areas should be surrounded by sidewalks and may have on-street parking.

Parks and the Heritage Trail can feature street furniture such as water fountains, information kiosks and adequate shelter from the elements.

On-Street Parking

On-street parking whenever possible to accommodate is recommended.

Street Design and Construction

The edge of the highway and other streets at the focal areas can be designed and detailed to have standard 6 inch curb-and gutter and necessary stormwater drainage where possible

When street lighting is required for automobiles, a combination of both pedestrian and vehicular scales is required. Street lights at the pedestrian scale have to be provided at the focal areas. Street lights should be placed at intervals of no more than 24 feet.

Turn radii for corners at the focal areas is suggested to be designed to the slowest possible speed. 10 to 15 feet turn radius is recommended for side streets. For turns into alleys and parking access the recommended turn radius is 5 feet.

Mile Markers

The proposed Key Largo mile marker has a marine motif based on the leaves of a sea grass plant (Figure 51).

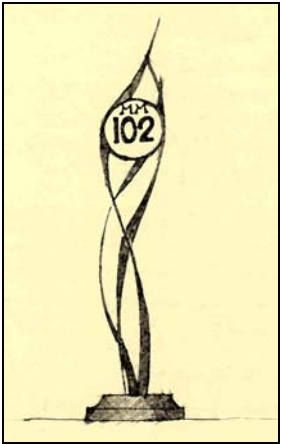


Figure 51 Prototypical Mile Marker

Landscape

Street trees can be planted to provide shade and should be planted at appropriate intervals, ideally interspersed with street lighting.

Tree canopies in the focal areas should be trimmed at a height no lower than 10 feet above the adjacent sidewalk.

Tree canopies on the highway should be trimmed at a height no lower than 14 feet.

Proper sight lines must be maintained at all intersections.

Downtown - On the north side of the roundabout, the center median should be planted with native understory trees at intervals of 25 to 35 feet. The side medians should be planted with canopy trees at intervals of 25 to 35 feet. The roundabout should be landscaped with ground planting only and can not obstruct the view of oncoming traffic.

Guidelines for Building Placement

The guidelines will be divided into three regulating areas ranging from the building location to its details.

Building Placement	Building Configuration	Building Elements
Setbacks Parking Driveways	Height Width Depth Façade Proportions Roof Shape Porches and Arcades	Roofs Exterior Walls Doors Windows Shutters Dormers Signs

Table 1 Regulating Standards of Construction

Setbacks

Setbacks are the minimum distances which structures must be held back from property lines. All norms for setbacks prevail in concurrence with the zoning law, except as follows:

Downtown - Properties of any use not fronting the highway may be built to the lot line. When a property is built on the lot line the front door has to be on the primary façade.

Parking

Parking requirements should meet land development regulations and should be in agreement with land use and development intensity, except as follows:

Street parking should be encouraged and intensified; all surface parking lots within the focal areas should be built to the interior of the block. Parking lots should not be placed in a corner.

Parking lots should include tree islands and lighting. Light fixtures should prevent glare and provide a minimum of 3-foot candles at ground level.

Parking spaces adjacent to pedestrian features should use wheel stops to prevent encroachment into the pedestrian realm.

Downtown - The shared parking formulas found in the land development regulations can be stretched so that more sharing of spaces can be permitted. The Planning Director will review applications for developments that propose to exceed the sharing thresholds provided in the regulations, and may approve the application if the parking needs are met.

Driveways

Downtown - All driveways to parking lots should be defined with curb-and-gutter detail and marked pedestrian crossings. Driveways should be paved with asphalt or concrete.

Building Configuration

Height

Building heights should follow the limits prescribed in the land development regulation. In addition, roof top equipment should be concealed from the front to the eye of a motorist or a pedestrian.

Width

The width of a building is the distance between the vertical edges along its front and it can be measured to an exterior wall or to the edge of a porch or arcade. The maximum continuous façade of any building fronting onto US Highway 1 should not be greater than 50 feet. A building wider than 50 feet should be architecturally defined as a series of smaller and repetitive units, with insets between primary façades. The inset façade should not be setback less than 6 feet. The inset façade should not be wider than 1/3 of a primary façade section. The arcade of a building may continue across this setback to provide architectural and pedestrian continuity at the ground level (Figure 52).

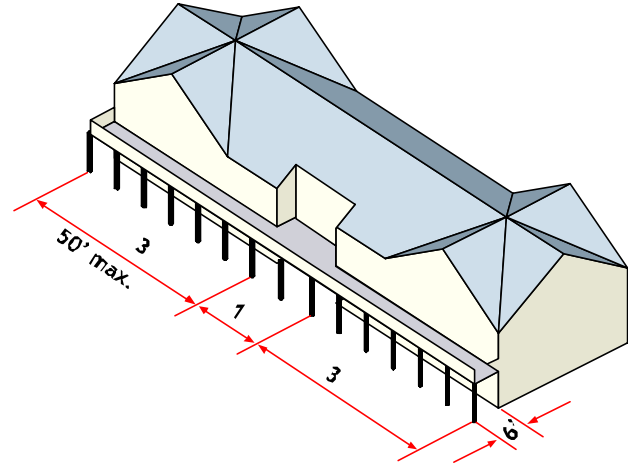


Figure 52 Building Width

Depth

The depth of a building is the distance between its front and back walls. Buildings deeper than 50 feet should show architectural insets defined as a series of smaller repetitive units. The minimum façade inset setback should be 3 feet (Figure 53).

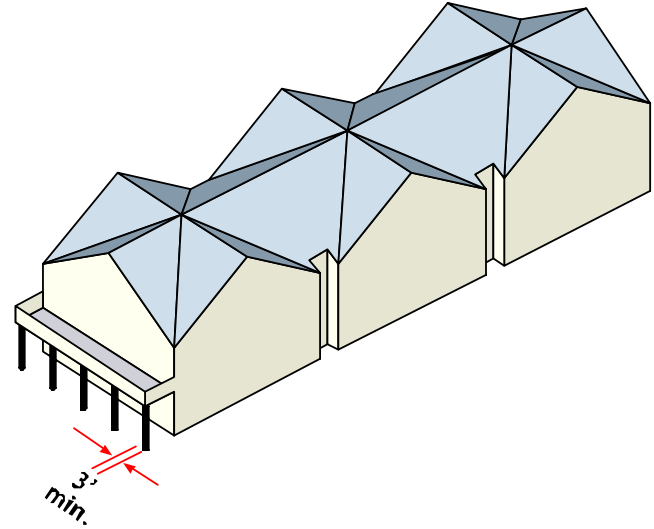


Figure 53 Building Depth

Porches and Arcades

All buildings fronting US Highway 1 should have a treatment such as arcades or porches. At a minimum, the building should have awnings extending no less than 6 feet (Figure 54). Arcades and porches should start at the setback line, and the clear interior dimension should not be narrower than 6 feet or wider than 12 feet. The proportions of the bays in arcades and porches should be predominantly vertical; the height should be at least 10% greater than the width. The minimum width for a bay should be 8 feet.

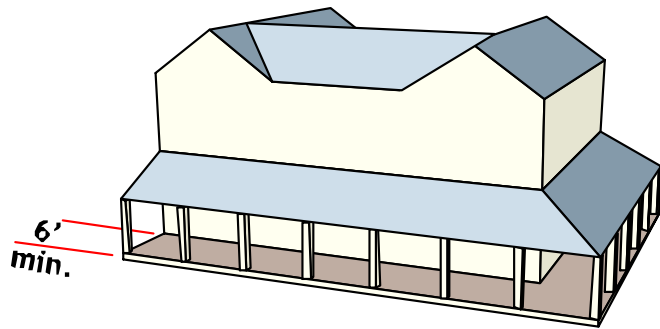


Figure 54 Example of a Commercial Building with a Porch

Building Elements

Roofs

Downtown - Roof materials such as standing seam metal, stamped metal and V-crimp metal are recommended. Flat roofs must be raked at the minimum slope necessary to shed water and meet

other construction standard requirements. Composition tile is not recommended.

Quay and Gateway - Allowable materials include standing seam metal, stamped metal and V-crimp metal. Composition tile is also allowable for residential buildings. Commercial buildings may have flat roofs.

Exterior Walls

Allowable materials include clapboard siding and novelty or drop siding. Masonry exterior finishes, such as stucco and textured stucco as well as exposed and painted brick, are recommended for commercial structures. Materials resembling wood siding may be acceptable if the building technique is properly applied. Fish scale siding is acceptable.

Awnings

If awnings are used, their design and placement should be consistent across the entire façade. Awnings should be made of fabric; high gloss or plasticized fabrics and metal should not be allowed.

Shutters

Shutters should be operable and should cover the entire surface of the window when closed. Removable hurricane shutters may be allowed if they are used only during storm events and their railing or application is not conspicuous. Two types of permanent hurricane resistant shutters should be allowed: bahama and hinged shutters.

Dormers

Dormers are allowable; however, applied dormers that are not structurally and spatially integrated with the building are not allowed. Dormers may be used as vents for the building's mechanical system. Dormers can also be used to expand the head room in the interior of a building.

Garbage Dumpsters

When a garbage dumpster cannot be on a side street, service way or alley, it has to be concealed within the building or by a hedge or a pergola.

Signs

Signs are the graphic means of conveying verbal and symbolic information. These guidelines apply to two types of signs:

1. Applied signs that are attached directly to a building; these are generally referred to as building signs (Figure 55).



Figure 55 Applied Sign

2. Projecting signs that are perpendicular to a building façade, to be seen as pedestrians pass by; these are often referred to as blade signs (Figure 56).

These two forms of signs can be controlled in order to help create an effective overall environment and remain sympathetic to the design of the subject building. There are two fundamental rules applicable to the creation of architecturally distinguished and dignified signage:



Figure 56 Projecting Sign

1. Signs can be externally illuminated, not translucent or internally illuminated.
2. Signs must be designed concurrently and coherently with the façade or shop front with which they are associated, sharing overall composition, material and color.

Each commercial use along US Highway 1 is allowed to have one sign oriented towards vehicular traffic and one that is oriented towards pedestrian traffic.

Wall signs and vertical blade signs must be affixed to the primary façade of the building, immediately above the designated commercial use. Canopy signs must be affixed to the canopy or awning immediately in front of the commercial use. Window signs must be within the windows of the designated use. Neon lighting can be used for window signs. Window signs can not occupy more than 25% of the available transparent glass area. Canopy signs must fit along the vertical edge of the canopy, and can be as wide as the width of the represented use.

When more than one commercial use is contained within a building, all of the commercial uses must use the same type of auto-oriented signage. Exceptions to this requirement must be negotiated on a case-by-case basis with the Planning Director.

Each use along US Highway 1 that has a distinct street number must portray that number adjacent to the appropriate entryway. Such numbers should be wall- or window-mounted, no less than 4 feet above adjacent grade and no more than 8 feet above adjacent grade, and should be placed as to be visible from US Highway 1. The individual numbers can be no less than 5 inches in height and no more than 8 inches in height. If the numbers are contained within a frame, the frame should be no more than one inch wider and higher than the enclosed numbers.

6. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The following is offered as an implementation strategy for the Enhancement Plan.

The Downtown

One of the most significant proposals of this plan is the creation of an overlay for the downtown to consolidate the area as a regional center that encourages infill development and the redevelopment of obsolete uses. The strategy is to build upon the existing urban structure in a compact manner that is pedestrian-oriented and utilizes mixed-use development. A component of affordable housing should be part of the downtown; ideally affordable housing units are a component of a range of housing types and price levels and that accommodate diverse ages and incomes. The landscaping should contribute to the definition of civic places and streets. The design of streets and buildings should promote a safe environment without compromising the accessibility.

Putting this project in motion would establish the County’s commitment to creating an urban environment where mixed use and housing of mixed incomes and would bring some focused development as a catalyst for further redevelopment and infill.

The Quay and the Tradewinds Plaza

Already in motion, plans for the redevelopment for the Quay will bring another kind of mixed use development. The combination of public offices with civic uses will create a campus setting with access to the waterfront. The benefits of development in the Quay extend beyond the parcel it will become a destination and a meeting point for locals as well as for visitor.

The Gateway

The gateway is also a partnership opportunity not only for the private sector and the County, but the State as well. Improvements

to the US 1 facility, the transition from regional traffic to a local one and the relationship to adjacent neighborhoods create an impact over a large number of people. These parties have to sit at the table to agree on issues such as connect roads to the infrastructure, creating a frontage rods that would minimize traffic conflict to creating opportunities for redevelopment in the overlay area.

General Improvements on US 1 Corridor

Continuing Rehabilitation and Infill, along with improvements to the road section, turning lanes, the bicycle path and the landscape of US 1 are part of the agenda that State and County official need to solve. A first step is the transference of residual lands that are currently in the right-of-way to the County. The need to expand bicycle paths to both sides of the road is prevalent as are the definition of acceleration and deceleration lanes, pedestrian crossings, and refuge islands.